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Title: Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Public festivities, related strictly to the feudal political system, were a manifestation of power and wealth, of both the monarchs and the noblemen. To add splendor to ceremonial entrances of kings, weddings, or funerals of high-ranking persons, magnificent decorations had been prepared, often by eminent artists. Due to their ephemeral nature, only a few of them remained until the present time, yet thanks to detailed accounts and iconographic sources, such as designs and graphic renditions, their forms and complex ideological content may be the subject of scientific research.

The book you have in your hands focuses on the issue of artistic setting of court ceremonies in the modern era, and are the result of cooperation between historians of art from the Jaume I University in Castellón de la Plana, the University of Valencia, Spain, and the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, which was established in 2016. The Spanish contributors belong to the group having the name "Iconografía e Historia del Arte", which have been conducting research on court culture and sponsoring of art for over twenty years. The initiative of publishing a joint monograph, undertaken by the Institute of Arts Studies of the University of Silesia, is a sign of ever increasing interest of Polish scientists in the issues referred to above.

The book is devoted to selected aspects of the royal and noble visual culture, strongly related to the image of power. The first chapter, *The festival books and the Habsburg empire: power and performance*, by Víctor Mínguez, deals with the relevance of literary and visual sources as a testimony of the Habsburg court's celebrations and explains their process of evolution in the 16th and 17th century.

María Inmaculada Rodríguez Moya, in the study *The Baroque festivals in the king's court (1555-1808)*, concluded her last research analysing the most relevant characteristics of the Spanish Royal Court's festivities in Royal Sites, Madrid and other significant cities. Her contribution permits to observe the peculiarity of Habsburgs and Bourbons festive iconography and its mediums, such as hieroglyphs, emblems, ephemeral architecture and urban embellishments.

Pablo González Tornel, in the text *Palermo: a Baroque capital of kings* described the urban reforms carried out in the 17th century, which transformed the Sicilian capital into one of the European cities most sharply defined by the image of royal power.

In the next chapter, *Festive courts in the New World: the political journey of Luis de Velasco y Castilla in the American viceroyalties*, Juan Chiva Beltrán raised the question of the symbolic presence of the Spanish king at the festivals organized in his American possessions, on the example of the triumphant tour of the 8th viceroy of New Spain.

Oskar J. Rojewski, in the text “*Pour la feste de l'ordre de la Thoison d'or de Mondit Seigneur nagaires tenue en sa ville de Bruges*” – *The Assembly of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1468 and artistic patronage of Charles the Bold* analysed the state accounts aiming the description of the ceremonial and artistic patronage of the Assembly of the Order of the Golden Fleece in the Burgundian State. The members of this institution during the Early Modern Age played an important role in the Habsburg international affairs and dynastic propaganda of power.

Antonio Gozalbo Nadal, in the study *The military march in honour of Charles V before the conquest of Tunis (Barcelona, 1535)*, collated the two relations about the great parade – organized on the eve of the Tunis expedition – with its representation on the second piece of the tapestry series *The Conquest of Tunis*, weaved in Brussels, between 1548 and 1554.

The text “*Con dos infantes colma la real cuna*”. *The festivals for twin grandchildren of Charles III and for the British peace in 1784*, by Cristina Igual Castelló, described the festivities that took place in Valencia to celebrate the signing of a peace between Spain and Great Britain as well as the birth of new infants. It is worth noticing that various institutions and organizations, such as the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the guilds, and the parishes cooperated in the creation of the ephemeral artworks with the intention to glorify the Monarchy.

Two final chapters, *The funeral ceremonies in the Church of the Descalzas Reales during the second half of 16th century*, by Victoria Bosch Moreno, and *The obsequies of the nobleman Stefan Krzucki and his exceptional catafalque*, by Mirosława Sobczyńska-Szczepańska, described the different ways to commemorate the deceased and to exalt the dead person's past, family and origins.

The authors of the book are very grateful to its reviewer, Professor Hanna Osiecka-Samsonowicz, for her appropriate and constructive suggestions.

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